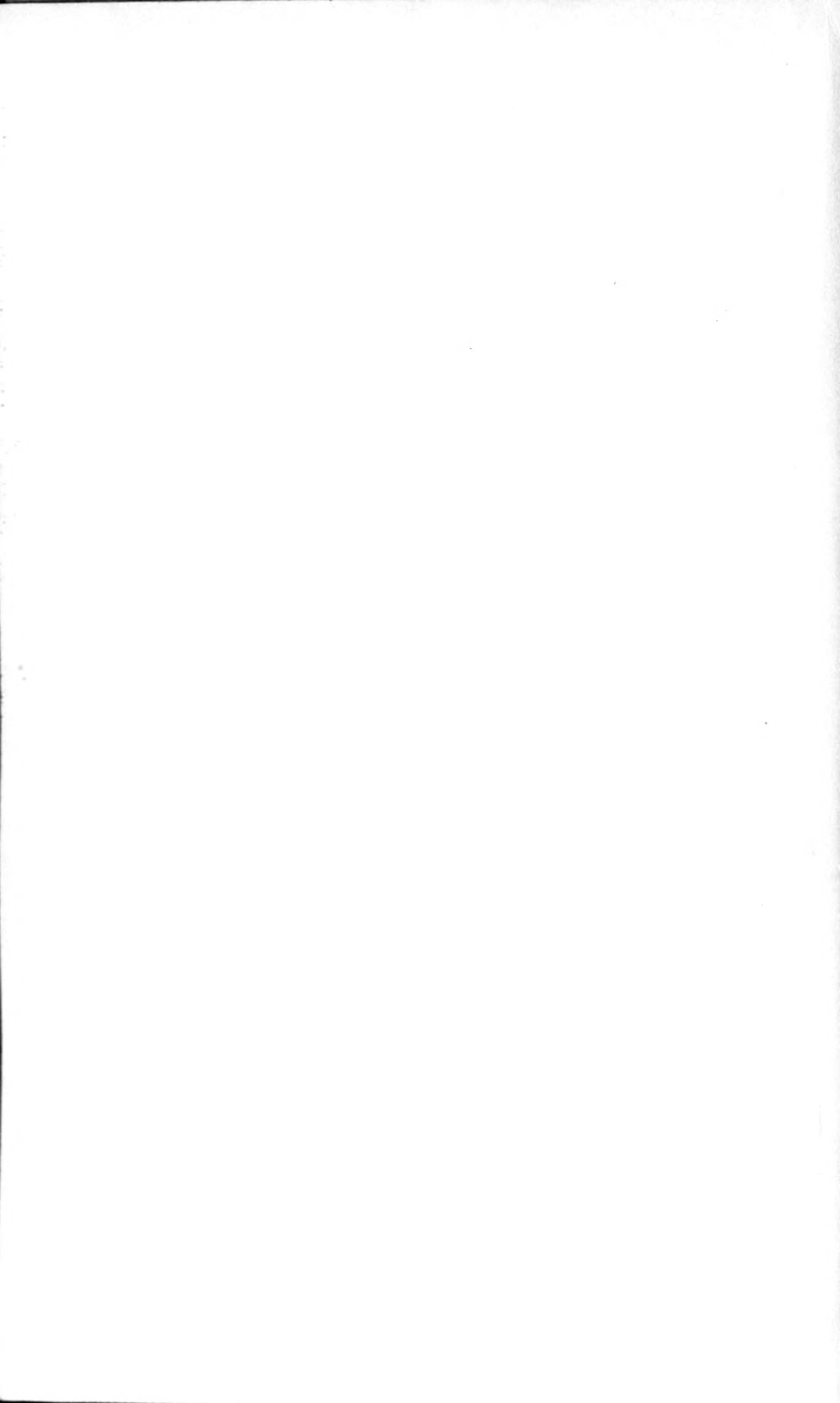




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SPEECH.

OF

MR. CHARLES HUDSON, OF MASS.,

ON THE

WHEAT TRADE OF THE COUNTRY.

Delivered in the House of Representatives of the U. S., Feb'y 26, 1846.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, and having under consideration the bill making appropriation for the improvement of harbors and rivers—

Mr. HUDSON, of Massachusetts, obtained the floor, and said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: On the rising of the committee yesterday you were pleased to report, that the committee had had the state of the Union generally under consideration; and the debate which had taken place, and that which has followed this morning, have fully justified that report. The gentleman from Alabama (Mr. PAYNE) and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. RHETT) have both objected to the passage of this bill, on the ground that it would make a heavy draught upon the treasury, and that such a scheme of internal improvements would defeat the proposed modification of the revenue laws of the country; and they called upon their friends, by all that was near and dear to them—by the success of their party—by their continuance in power—by all that was sacred in the name of Democracy, to come forward and save the people from a policy which must ensure the continuance of the present odious system of taxation. As these gentlemen have been indulged in this course of remark, I trust that I shall be allowed to follow their example. I am in favor of this bill, because such improvements facilitate intercourse between different and distant sections of the country, and so promote the interest of trade and commerce.

The present, Mr. Chairman, is an important era in the history of our country. The President, at the opening of the session, recommended the abandonment of that policy which is coeval with our Government—a policy under which the nation has grown and prospered. We have also been told by the Secretary of the Treasury that we must abandon all protection of domestic industry, in order to procure the repeal of the English Corn laws. The British ministry approve of the policy recommended, endorse the doctrines of the American Secretary, and order his report to be published and laid upon the desks of the members of Parliament, as a valuable document to promote British interests. An effort has been made on both sides of the Atlantic to change fundamentally the policy of this country, by the introduction of a system which would check the prosperity of the people, paralyze every interest, and so greatly impair that very commerce which these improvements are calculated to promote. We see Sir Robert Peel and Sir Robert Walker in what the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. RHETT) calls “a disastrous conjunction,” to bring about this result—a result truly disastrous to our beloved country, but to Great Britain a “consummation devoutly to be wished.”

As the subject of the Corn laws has been presented for consideration by both

Governments, I propose to call the attention of this committee to this subject, and to the effect which the repeal or modification of these laws would have upon the commerce of our country. And I regard this question as strictly pertinent to the subject before us. The grain of the West must find its way to the Atlantic through the very channels which this bill is designed to improve. The wheat trade is an important item in our commerce, and everything which affects that trade will render these improvements more or less necessary.

The subject of the corn trade of the United States has of late attracted the attention of our people; and, although it is one of importance, I am confident that its importance has been greatly overrated. From the language which is sometimes employed, we might naturally infer that wheat and flour constituted a great portion of the exports of the country. But a recurrence to official documents will show that, for a series of years, our export of wheat and flour does not exceed one-twentieth of our whole export.

I propose, Mr. Chairman, to take a brief view of the wheat trade of the United States. And here I will state, once for all, that I shall use the term wheat to include *flour*; and, in all my estimates, I make a barrel of flour equal to five bushels of wheat. The wheat crop of the United States, in 1840, according to the census returns, amounted to 84,823,000 bushels, and in 1844, according to the report of the Commissioner of Patents, to 95,607,000 bushels. Of this 96,000,000 bushels, which is about the average for the last five years, we have exported about one-thirteenth, or 7,400,000 bushels. Nearly one-tenth of the whole crop will be required for seed. In Great Britain the estimate has been about three bushels of seed to the acre, but with us two bushels to the acre would be a fair average for all parts of the country. Now, if we should take from the whole crop the amount required for seed, and the amount exported, it would leave for home consumption 79,000,000 of bushels. This amount divided among our population, say 19,600,000, would give 3 9-10ths bushels to every man, woman, and child, in the country. But it is manifest that the consumption of wheat is not equal in every section. The black population at the South consume but little wheat, and the agriculturists in the New England States make considerable use of rye and Indian corn for bread; though the consumption of wheat is becoming every year more general. As far as I am acquainted, in all communities which purchase their breadstuff, wheat is the principal article of consumption; and we may safely estimate this consumption at one barrel of flour or five bushels of wheat a year per head. This class will include the manufacturers and mechanics—those engaged in mining, in commerce, in navigation, in all its forms; and if we add to these those engaged in the various professions and callings, other than agriculture, and all those residing in the wheat-growing sections of the country, it will constitute about three-fifths of our entire population; and these will consume about 58,800,000 bushels of wheat, leaving for the other two-fifths 20,200,000 bushels, being about 2½ bushels per head. This calculation being general, will not hold good in every case. A soldier's rations, for example, would amount to 9 bushels of wheat per year, and some of our population engaged in the fisheries would consume as much. Flour is also largely consumed in our manufactories in the form of starch and sizing. The manufactories at Lowell alone consume between four and five thousand barrels of flour annually.

I have been thus particular, Mr. Chairman, for the purpose of showing that the greater part of our wheat is consumed at home, and that the home market is the great source whence the wheat growers derive their support. The quantity of wheat which we have sent abroad, for the last 12 or 15 years, will not exceed 6 or 7 per cent. of the quantity produced, as will be seen by the following table made up from the commercial documents:

Table of Imports and Exports of Wheat and Flour, in bushels, together with the value of the same from 1831 to 1844 inclusive.

EXPORTS.			IMPORTS.		EXCESS
Years.	Bushels.	Value.	Bushels.	Value.	Bushels.
1831	9,441,090	\$10,461,715	633	\$699	9,440,457
1832	4,407,899	4,974,123	1,191	1,180	4,406,708
1833	4,811,061	5,642,602	1,697	1,716	4,809,364
1834	4,213,708	4,560,379	1,307	1,295	4,212,401
1835	3,944,742	4,446,182	311,805	268,633	3,632,937
1836	2,529,062	3,574,561	650,629	565,500	1,878,433
1837	1,610,898	3,014,415	4,000,000	4,276,976	2,389,102
1838	2,247,096	3,617,724	927,180	940,838	1,319,916
1839	4,712,080	7,069,361	41,725	57,747	4,670,355
1840	11,198,365	11,779,098	1,436	1,069	11,196,929
1841	8,447,670	8,582,527	652	900	8,447,018
1842	7,237,968	8,292,308	4,153	3,796	7,233,815
1843	4,519,055	4,027,182	12,121	8,542	4,506,934
1844	7,751,587	7,232,898	1,611	1,664	7,749,501
Average	5,505,162	\$6,233,533	425,442	\$437,897	5,065,390 over imports.

Exports.

Imports.

Exports.

Here, sir, it will be seen that our average export of wheat to all foreign countries, for the last fourteen years, amounts to only 5,505,162 bushels; or, if we deduct the average imports, it will amount to only about 5,000,000 bushels. It will also be seen that our exports do not keep pace with our population. In 1831, we sent abroad, with a population of 13,000,000, 9,441,000 bushels, being 23 quarts per head upon our population; but in 1844, with a population of 19,600,000, we sent abroad 7,751,000 bushels, being only 13 quarts per head. Here is a falling off in our surplus of nearly fifty per cent. But as it is unfair to reason from a single year, and 1831 being one of unusually large crop, we will take an average of three years. Take the years 1831, '32, and '33, and we have an average export of 6,220,000 bushels; while the years 1841, '42, and '43, give an average of 6,967,000 bushels, being an increase of 11 per cent., while our population has increased about 33 per cent. For the last ten years, our surplus for export has not increased in the ratio of our population; and the same causes which have operated for the last ten years, will be likely to operate for years to come. We have had, and, if peace continues, shall be likely to have, a large flood of foreign emigration to the country. But as these emigrants generally settle upon new lands, they do not, for the first year or two, add to the wheat product of the country. On the contrary, while clearing their lands, and building their cabins, they are consumers, and constitute a considerable market for the grain of the West. And while the new wheat lands are being brought into the market, the old wheat lands of the Atlantic States are becoming exhausted, and so yield a less crop. It is also true, that, as population increases in the West, and settlements become more dense, a larger per cent. of the people leave the pursuit of agriculture, and engage in other callings; and hence the demand will increase as rapidly as the supply. We must also expect deficient crops from time to time. The past year is an example of this. In some parts of the country, the drought of the past season has greatly reduced the wheat crop; and the disease of the potatoe will increase the demand for wheat at home as well as abroad.

I have no disposition to undervalue the wheat trade of the country. It furnishes an important item in our exports. But, at the same time, I must be permitted to say, that its importance is frequently exaggerated. From language which is frequently employed, I should be led to conclude that wheat, next to cotton, was the great export from the country; and that these, with perhaps tobacco, constituted nearly our whole export. But, by reference to the Commercial document, from year to year, it will be seen that, for fifteen years, our wheat and flour have not amounted to more than about one-twentieth of our export. That the committee may see the relative importance of the wheat trade, I have prepared a table from the Commercial documents, which I will read:

Value of some of the principal articles of Export from the U. States, from 1831 to 1844 inclusive.

Year.	Fisheries.	Beef and Pork.*	Cotton piece goods	Other manufact'es.	Wheat & Flour.
	Value.	Value.	Value.	Value.	Value.
1831	\$1,889,472	\$2,596,422	\$1,126,313	\$4,677,886	\$10,461,715
1832	2,558,538	2,993,103	1,229,574	4,194,440	4,974,123
1833	2,402,469	3,369,086	2,532,517	4,355,712	5,642,802
1834	2,071,493	2,741,319	2,085,994	4,627,391	4,560,379
1835	2,174,524	2,580,102	2,858,681	4,079,308	4,446,182
1836	2,660,058	2,196,493	2,255,734	4,660,014	3,574,561
1837	2,711,452	1,981,118	2,831,473	5,980,375	3,014,415
1838	3,175,576	1,998,768	3,758,755	5,251,603	3,617,724
1839	1,917,968	2,276,426	2,975,033	5,044,138	7,069,361
1840	3,198,370	2,729,026	3,549,607	7,064,160	11,779,098
1841	2,846,851	4,031,270	3,122,546	7,653,040	8,582,527
1842	2,823,610	4,230,226	2,970,690	6,799,167	8,292,308
1843	2,112,548	3,721,937	3,223,550	4,131,176	4,027,182
1844	3,350,501	4,311,004	2,898,780	6,781,754	7,232,898
Average	\$2,556,673	\$2,982,592	\$2,672,803	\$5,314,297	\$6,233,533

*Including butter, cheese, lard, bacon, &c.

This summary view of certain articles of export shows that the value of wheat and flour sent to all foreign countries, for the last fourteen years, will average \$6,233,000 a year. During the same period, our beef and pork, including all the avails and product of cattle and swine, have amounted to \$2,980,000, and the product of the fisheries to \$2,556,000; each of these articles being nearly half as much as our entire export of wheat. And even cotton piece goods, the product of our despised manufactures, which are represented as being injurious to commerce, have amounted, on an average, to \$2,674,000, nearly half as much as the wheat sent from the country. But if we add to cotton piece goods all other manufactures exported, we have a total of \$7,987,000 annually, being more than the value of wheat exported.

But, sir, this is not all. I have followed the classification of the Commercial document; but every gentleman acquainted with the subject knows that there are articles, some of which are strictly, and others substantially, manufactured articles, which are not, in that document, placed under the head of manufactures. In the Commercial document of the last year, I find the following articles, with their values placed under other heads:

Spermaceti candles	-	-	-	\$180,492
Staves, shingles, boards, hewn timber, masts, spars, &c.	-	-	-	2,022,498
All manufactures of wood	-	-	-	919,100
Naval stores, tar, pitch, rosin, and turpentine	-	-	-	818,692
Ashes, pot and pearl,	-	-	-	1,140,884—\$5,081,666

Here we have a total of more than five millions of manufactured articles, which, in the Commercial document, are placed under the head of products of the forest and of the fisheries. Add these to the articles set down as manufactures, and we have an export of more than thirteen millions, the product of our infant manufactures.

I have no disposition to disparage the wheat trade of the country. It is an important trade, and one which should be cherished with the greatest care. But devotion to any cause should never lead us to overlook an important fact. I rejoice that we are able to export wheat at the average rate of \$6,000,000 a year; and I rejoice, also, that our infant manufactures are able to send forth to foreign countries fabrics to twice that amount. I am in favor of the corn trade of the country; and, for that very reason, I wish to inform the wheat growers that the proposed change in the British corn laws will probably operate against them, and may prove highly detrimental to their interest.

I am confident, Mr. Chairman, that there is a great misapprehension on this subject of trade. Some gentlemen seem to take it for granted that Great Britain is the principal, and almost the only market for our breadstuff. But nothing can be more false. I have data, drawn from the official documents of the Government, which confute any such hypothesis.

Table of exports of wheat and flour, in bushels, to some of the principal markets; and also the total amount of exports of wheat to all foreign countries, for fourteen consecutive years.

Year.	Great Britain.	B. N. A. Colonies.	Cuba.	Brazil.	All for'n countr's.
1831	4,690,873	766,460	489,995	994,350	9,441,090
1832	534,390	698,977	491,440	516,445	4,407,899
1833	108,535	872,056	595,985	1,297,680	4,811,061
1834	97,435	698,122	514,185	763,015	4,213,708
1835	26,880	372,035	467,555	807,300	3,944,742
1836	805	213,582	461,950	592,350	2,529,062
1837	—	116,580	277,685	302,400	1,610,898
1838	41,475	154,031	398,405	626,375	2,247,096
1839	843,943	189,148	452,295	886,685	4,712,080
1840	3,635,998	3,228,384	349,883	989,115	11,198,365
1841	1,145,574	2,579,419	346,935	1,428,487	8,447,670
1842	1,167,810	2,500,734	238,309	946,585	7,237,968
1843	71,070	1,245,452	147,185	962,270	4,519,055
1844	858,718	2,059,704	174,375	1,440,905	7,751,587
Average,	944,536	1,166,048	386,155	896,711	5,505,162

Here we have the authority of the Commercial document, made up at the Treasury Department, showing the direction of the trade in question. And what does it prove? Why, sir, that the total average of the export of wheat, for the last fourteen years, is 5,505,000 bushels, and that the average export to Great Britain is only 944,000, being about *one-sixth* of the whole. Our trade with Great Britain in this article is greatly overrated. For the last fourteen years, we have sent to England only 8 per cent. more than to Brazil; and, for the last three years, Brazil has taken 60 per cent. more than England. Our trade with Canada, for a number of years past, has been greater than with England itself. For the last seven years, we have sent into the British North American colonies 12,586,900 bushels; and to England at the same time, 7,764,600 bushels; showing a greater demand in Canada than in England by 62 per cent. I am aware that it will be said that most of the wheat which is sent into Canada finds its way into Great Britain. I admit it; and shall endeavor to show hereafter, that, in this indirect trade, we now en-

joy a sort of monopoly, by the operation of the present corn laws of Great Britain, but of which we should be deprived by a repeal of those laws. This is, in fact, the point to which I wish to call attention—the great question for the committee and the country to consider.

But let us now inquire into the capacity of the English market. What amount of wheat, of foreign growth, does she consume annually? I have compiled the following table from the Parliamentary reports of Great Britain?

Amount of wheat and wheat flour, in bushels, imported into Great Britain, for home consumption, from 1829 to 1843, inclusive, distinguishing foreign from colonial.

Year.	Foreign.	Colonial.	Total.	Year.	Foreign.	Colonial.	Total.
	Bushels.	Bushels.	Bushels.		Bushels.	Bushels.	Bushels.
1829	11,504,768	68,840	11,572,608	1838	14,550,624	237,176	14,787,800
1830	13,338,304	484,472	13,822,776	1839	21,592,848	101,936	21,693,784
1831	10,952,352	1,101,568	12,052,920	1840	18,291,096	910,392	19,201,488
1832	1,510,160	1,551,880	3,062,040	1841	19,105,264	2,076,808	21,182,072
1833	10,560	661,648	672,208	1842	22,202,512	1,714,648	23,917,160
1834	2,320	517,472	519,792	1843	7,586,472	1,953,912	9,540,384
1835	960	227,440	228,400				
1836	8,360	232,496	240,856				
1837	1,686,176	293,000	1,979,176	Average,	9,489,518	703,911	10,964,896

Here, it will be seen, that, for the last fifteen years, the average import into Great Britain is 10,964,896 bushels. It will also be seen, by an inspection of the table, that her demand has been exceedingly variable, ranging from 228,400 to 23,917,100 bushels. Nor is this all. In 1835 and 1836, she actually exported a large amount to this and other countries. In price, too, there has been a great fluctuation. In 1835, the average price of wheat in Great Britain was \$1 07, and in 1839, \$1 92 per bushel. But not to rely upon single years. In 1829, '30, and '31, she imported on an average, 12,482,700 bushels; in 1834, '35, and '36, an average of only 329,900; and in 1840, '41, and '42, an average of 21,434,000. From this view of the subject, it will be seen that but little dependence can be placed upon that market. At one time she requires a considerable supply of foreign grain; at another she raises more than she consumes. In 1836, '37, and '38, she supplied us with an average of 445,403 bushels a year, direct; and we obtained nearly half as much more from her Canadian possessions. The demand of the English market is not only fluctuating, but, as a general truth, we may say that her supply at home is gaining upon her demand, rather than otherwise. In 1829, '30, and '31, with a population of about 23,000,000, she consumed, as we have already seen, an average of 12,482,700 bushels; and in 1843, with a population of about 27,000,000, she consumed 9,540,300 bushels of foreign wheat.

Tooke, an experienced English writer, informs us that, from 1832 to 1838, the crops in Great Britain and Ireland were so abundant, that wheat was fed out to cattle, sheep, and swine, and even used for distillation. This induced the farmer to sow less; and, for several succeeding years, the winters were unfavorable for the crops, and the season of harvest was unpropitious, so as to increase the demand for foreign grain. Every man acquainted with English agriculture knows that great improvements are constantly taking place in her mode of cultivation. Bogs and swamps are being reclaimed, barren hill sides are being converted into fruitful fields, and her waste places are being made to blossom like the rose. She has

also adopted an improved mode of seeding. Until quite recently, the wheat growers were in the habit of sowing about three bushels of grain to the acre. But Drummond, a late English writer, says that, by the introduction of a new machine for sowing wheat, which distributes the grain equally over the whole surface of the ground, they have found that a less quantity of seed will answer equally well; and that this improvement alone will save to the United Kingdom five or six millions of bushels, and thus supply at least one-third of her deficiency. Under these circumstances, it is not probable that her demand for foreign grain will materially increase. Her own supply will increase with her demand. The means of the mass of her people are limited; and we cannot expect that, under any circumstances, she will take a quantity of foreign grain much, if any, larger than she does at present.

But suppose that her demand increases, where will she obtain her supply? Where has she obtained it in years past? In 1841, '42, and '43, when she made her largest importations, averaging 18,300,000 bushels, or about 54,000,000 for the three years, her supply was obtained from the following nations, in the following proportion:

Importation of wheat into Great Britain from the principal wheat countries for 1841, 1842, and 1843, in bushels, together with the sum total from each country.

Countries.	1841.	1842.	1843.	Total.
Russia.....	498,205	1,824,688	269,368	2,592,261
Denmark.....	1,915,279	617,656	565,248	3,098,183
Prussia.....	7,134,400	5,938,065	5,311,000	18,383,465
Germany.....	5,295,674	1,626,172	1,027,224	7,949,070
Holland.....	815,964	73,979	6,864	896,507
France.....	1,643,932	4,216,100	29,248	5,889,280
Italy and Island.....	901,600	4,878,597	24,840	5,805,037
North American Colonies.....	2,333,354	3,729,690	2,790,504	6,853,548
United States.....	1,107,840	1,195,873	749,601	3,053,273
All other countries.....	866,859	1,816,340	272,407	2,955,606

Here, sir, we have a view of the demand and supply of the English market for three successive years. And does it appear that that market is to be regarded as ours? And is the United States the only country on which Great Britain is to depend for her breadstuff? A glance at this table will show at once that our supply, when compared with that of the continent, dwindles almost to insignificance. Russia supplies nearly as much as the United States; Denmark a trifle more; Prussia more than six times as much; Germany and Holland nearly three times as much; France and Italy each nearly twice as much; and the British North American colonies more than twice as much as this boasted granary of the world. To show the relative importance of our trade to Great Britain, it is barely necessary to say that, of every hundred bushels sent to the English market, we supply only five.

We have seen that the importations of wheat into Great Britain have been exceedingly fluctuating, ranging from 228,000 to 23,917,000 bushels. A fair estimate of the English demand, for a term of years to come, may, I think, be put down at 15,000,000 bushels annually. And where will she obtain her supply? From the United States? Why have they not supplied that market in years past? Will it be said that the corn laws have operated against us? But those laws have been general in their operation. Why have not these restrictions operated against the nations on the continent? The thirty-three millions of bushels brought from the north, during the three years, and the twelve millions from the south of Europe,

have been subjected to the same duty as the three millions from the United States. And if they can supply more than nine-tenths of the wheat under the present law, they can do the same under a less restricted dispensation, or a system of perfect free trade.

I say, sir, for years to come we may fairly estimate the demand in Great Britain at 15,000,000 of bushels annually ; and, judging from the past, we may say that the United States will supply 1,000,000, and the continent the other 14,000,000. And there can be no doubt but that the continent can furnish that supply, and even more if it were required. In 1840 the British Government called upon their consuls, at some of the principal marts of the corn trade, to inform them what amount of grain could be sent to the English market in case the English duty were reduced to a nominal sum. The substance of their replies will be seen in the following table, submitted, with their report, to Parliament in 1841 :

	Bushels.
St. Petersburg.....	1,540,000
Liebau.....	240,000
Warsaw.....	2,400,000
Odessa.....	1,200,000
Stockholm.....	8,000
Dantzic.....	2,520,000
Königsberg.....	520,000
Stettin.....	2,000,000
Memel.....	47,712
Hamburg.....	4,304,000
Elsineur.....	1,400,000
Palermo.....	1,600,000
	17,779,712

From these twelve ports it appears that a supply of 17,779,700 bushels of wheat could be obtained annually ; and it further appears that 7,298,000 bushels of rye, 6,820,500 bushels of barley, and 6,445,700 bushels of oats, could be supplied. In this list is not included Riga, Rotterdam, Antwerp, and several other important ports for the corn trade. In answer to the inquiry, whether the quantity could be increased if there were a steady demand in Great Britain, the consul at St. Petersburg says : “ There are *extensive tracts* of land in the provinces that now supply St. Petersburg, which would *no doubt* be brought into cultivation were a steady and certain market for wheat opened in this place. In years of abundance the quantity which could be exported would be three times as great as is stated in the table.” From Riga the consul writes : “ When the foreign demand is very urgent the distant provinces of Smolensk, Kaluga, and Orel, send supplies to Riga. The principal wheat districts are too remote from the ports to enable the farmers to get their crops to the market sufficiently early for exportation the same year ; and, therefore, they cannot profit so decidedly by the occurrence of a bad harvest in England as those in the neighborhood of some other of the Baltic ports.” From Memel, the reply is : “ In four or five years about a fourth more of grain will be cultivated.” From Warsaw, the answer is, “ that the quantity of wheat grown in Poland has increased considerably for the last six years, and the production might no doubt be further gradually increased if there were a steady demand for foreign corn in England.” The consul from Elsinore reports as follows : “ In case of a steady and regular demand in England for foreign corn, the quantity produced in Denmark would, without difficulty, and in a short space of time, be *materially increased*.”

Thus it appears that the nations upon the Baltic can, in addition to the 17 or 18 millions of bushels of wheat set down in the table, contribute a still further supply.

One of the great difficulties under which the north of Europe has labored, is the want of communication with the Baltic. The consuls, in their statements, frequently allude to the fact that large sections of wheat lands in the interior are neglected, for the want of cheap and ready communication with the seaports. But this difficulty is fast being removed. The numerous plans for railroads, which have been adopted in Russia, Germany, and all the northern and interior States, will bring large quantities of wheat lands into cultivation, and so enable them to supply a still larger amount of grain, should the English market require it.

It also appears, by returns made to Parliament, that the English East India possessions supply a portion of her breadstuff. In 1842 they sent to England 170,000 bushels of wheat, and, as the business intercourse increases, the supplies will increase.

From this glance at the subject, it appears that the whole demand of the English market could be supplied, and more than supplied, from the eastern continent. If the United States should withhold every bushel, there would, in ordinary cases, be no lack of grain for the English market. But we are told that the repeal of the English corn laws would increase the consumption, and hence a larger quantity would be required in that market. As a general rule a reduction of price will increase the consumption of an article, and this principle will apply to the subject before us, as well as to any other. But still there are causes which will, in my estimation, tend to counteract this effect. If the price of wheat is reduced in Great Britain, as her dependence is mainly upon her own crops, it will tend to reduce the price of labor, and hence diminish the ability of the laboring classes to purchase. This may operate to the full amount of the reduction, and so prevent any increased consumption. Any thing which promotes general prosperity will increase the ability of the people to purchase, and whatever paralyzes business necessarily produces a diminished consumption. The price of wheat depends upon many causes other than the operation of enactments. In 1842 Sir Robert Peel adopted an important change in the corn laws of the Kingdom, a change by which the duties were reduced at once about one-half. This law took effect in April, 1842, and yet, in the first entire year after this change had taken place, viz: in 1843, the import of wheat fell off more than one-half, the import of 1843 being only 9,540,000 bushels, while the average importation for the three years preceding this change of the law was 20,692,000 bushels. I do not suppose that this falling off in 1843 was produced by the reduction of duties, but this example clearly shows that the quantity of foreign grain consumed in Great Britain is controlled by laws more efficient than the corn laws. Judging from this experiment, we have no reason to believe that the opening of her ports would have any considerable effect upon the demand for foreign grain.

I have, I trust, clearly shown that the eastern continent has the physical ability of supplying the English market with breadstuff. And what is their financial ability? Can the nations upon the Baltic afford their grain in the English market as low as the United States? This is the great question to be decided. I have taken pains to satisfy myself upon this subject, and I have come to the conclusion that they can undersell us in that market. In the first place, we see that they do so at present, when the corn laws operate equally upon them and upon us. So long as the laws are equally applicable to them and us, it matters not whether the duty is high or low, or whether there is any duty at all. I say that they undersell us now, as appears by the fact that they supply 14 times as much as the United States.

The following table will show the prices of wheat per bushel in the principal marts of trade on the Continent, from 1830 to 1843, inclusive:

	Dantzic.	Hamburg.	Amsterdam	Antwerp.	Odessa.
1830.....	\$1.07.....	.93.....	1.13.....	.95.....	.68.....
1831.....	1.18.....	1.19.....	1.15.....	1.07.....	.71.....
1832.....	.93.....	.90.....	1.10.....	.90.....	.62.....
1833.....	.83.....	.70.....	.89.....	.55.....	.61.....
1834.....	.70.....	.67.....	.66.....	.50.....	.77.....
1835.....	.61.....	.65.....	.76.....	.68.....	.57.....
1836.....	.70.....	.79.....	.76.....	.70.....	.52.....
1837.....	.73.....	.76.....	.81.....	.99.....	.50.....
1838.....	.94.....	.79.....	1.20.....	1.48.....	.65.....
1839.....	.96.....	1.15.....	1.33.....	1.37.....	.79.....
1840.....	1.07.....	1.30.....	1.11.....	1.48.....	.71.....
1841.....	1.23.....	.99.....	1.09.....	1.45.....	.74.....
1842.....	1.10.....	1.11.....	1.11.....	.95.....	.65.....
1843.....	.76.....	.82.....	.78.....	.76.....	.48.....
Average.....	.91.....	.90.....	.99.....	.98.....	.64.....

Here we have the prices of wheat, at five great marts of the wheat trade, for 14 years, showing a general average at 88 cents per bushel,

The prices at our sea ports during the same period, run as follows :

In 1830.....	\$1.15	In 1837.....	\$1.83
1831.....	1.18	1838.....	1.54
1832.....	1.15	1839.....	1.42
1833.....	1.13	1840.....	1.10
1834.....	1.08	1841.....	1.93
1835.....	1.19	1842.....	1.16
1836.....	1.44	1843.....	1.00

The general average of the aforementioned prices is \$1.25 ; being 37 cents more than the average per bushel at the aforementioned ports on the Black sea and Baltic. This shows demonstratively, that, in the first cost of the grain, we are not able to come into fair competition with our trans-atlantic wheat growers. And how is it with reference to freight? By official documents laid before Parliament, it appears that the freight on the highest calculation cannot exceed, on an average, 13 cents per bushel. By the report of the Hon. Mr. Ellsworth, Commissioner of Patents, laid before Congress in 1843, where he examines this subject somewhat minutely, it appears that the average freight from New York to Liverpool is 35 or 36 cents per cwt. We cannot estimate wheat at less than 56 pounds per bushel ; and hence the freight must amount to 17 or 18 cents per bushel. The difference in the freight and first cost would make a balance against us of 41 cents per bushel. But as the year 1837 was one of uncommonly high prices in this country, I will omit that year in my estimate, which will reduce this balance down to about 36 cents ; and from this I will deduct, for the difference of exchange, 10 cents, which will bring the difference down to 26 cents per bushel.

The English consul, writing from Odessa, at the close of 1842, says : "Under present circumstances, extraordinary low freight and favorable exchange, a shipment of the best wheat could now be made and delivered in England on the following terms, viz :

	s.	d.	
First cost	22	6	per quarter.
Charge of loading	2	5	"
Freight	6	7	"
Insurance and factorage in England	4	0	"
Total	35	6	"

This reduced to our currency would amount to 97 cents per bushel delivered in England. And in 1843 there was a still further reduction ; so that wheat from the Baltic could be delivered in England without duty at 87 cents, and from the Black

sea at 78 or 80 cents per bushel. A price much less than our wheat could be purchased at in our own ports.

This, as it appears to me, is a just and fair view of the subject. But it may be said that I have proved too much. And if the argument be sound, we cannot send any grain to Great Britain. But every practical man knows, that, between two great commercial nations, an article will be exported from one to the other, when the prices in the two countries seem to forbid. The wheat that we have sent to Great Britain is, to a considerable extent, the result of accidental causes. A merchant is indebted abroad, and must send forth something to discharge his debt, and not being able to meet the demand in specie, he sends forward a quantity of flour. Or, a vessel is going out without a full cargo, and will take grain for a mere trifle. Or, a speculator has a large amount of flour on hand, bought perhaps on six months, and is obliged to send it out at a sacrifice. Our grain goes to England mainly in the shape of flour, by which a saving of 10 or 15 per cent. over the export of wheat is realized. These are the causes, more than any thing else, which enable us to supply the English market to the small extent we now do. Ask our merchants who have had experience in this trade, and they will generally tell you that it is a precarious business, and one in which much more has been lost than made.

But gentlemen seem to suppose that the repeal of the corn laws will give a new impulse to this trade. But how is this? On what principle, I demand, do they base their calculations? If these laws are modified or repealed, it will be done by a general law, applicable alike to all nations. The present law imposes no more duty upon wheat from the United States than upon wheat from the Baltic. Suppose those duties be reduced one half, or annulled entirely, the north of Europe will enjoy all the advantages of these changes as well as we. The scarcity of grain in Europe, the partial failure of the wheat crop, and the disease among the potatoes, enable us at the present time to send forth an unusual quantity. But it is unsafe to reason from a single year. In 1837, as we have already seen, we imported 4,000,000 bushels of wheat into the United States; and, were we to reason from that year, we should be compelled to admit that we could not raise our own bread stuff? If we could reason correctly on subjects such as this, we must take a succession of years into the account. And if we do this, we shall, I think, at once perceive that a modification of the English corn laws would not benefit us at all.

We have had a practical illustration of this principle. As I have before said, the modification of the English corn laws in 1842 did not increase the demand for grain in Great Britain; on the contrary, in the first entire year after the reduction, the importation into Great Britain fell off more than one-half. And how was it with our export to that market? The reduction in 1842 was about equal to the whole of the present duty; and Sir Robert Peel does not propose to take off all the duty at present. If the proposed reduction is to operate so much in our favor, we may expect to find that the greater reduction in 1842 proved a great blessing to the United States. And how was it with that modification?

I will tell you, Mr. Chairman. The reduction took place in April, 1842, and falling in the midst of the commercial year, I have no means of determining its effect upon our exports for that year. I will, therefore, throw that year out of the account, and take the two years preceding, and the two succeeding, 1842. In the two preceding, viz., 1840 and 1841, we exported to Great Britain an average of 2,290,000 bushels a year; but the two succeeding, viz., 1843 and 1844, we exported only an average of 464,800 bushels a year. But, sir, as I wish to do perfect justice to the subject, I readily admit that, by a change in our commercial year the year 1843 consisted of only nine months. I wish, therefore, to add to it ano-

ther quarter, so as to make it of the usual length. But if we add one-third to the imports of that year, so as to make up four quarters, or twelve months, we shall have even then an average for the two years of only 476,700 bushels a year, which is in fact less than one-fifth of the average export of the two years preceding the modification of the English corn laws. I am not superficial enough to ascribe this falling off of our export of wheat to the reduction of the British duties; but the case before us shows incontestibly that our wheat trade with England is governed by laws more efficient, more controlling, than any rate of duty. Is it not, then, perfectly preposterous to maintain that the partial reduction, or prospective repeal of the British duty upon wheat, will of necessity enable us to send more of our breadstuff to that kingdom?

But, sir, though no intelligent gentleman can, I think, see any just cause for believing that we shall gain materially in the direct trade, it must be perfectly obvious that we shall lose in an indirect trade with Great Britain. Our best, and in fact our principal trade with the mother country in the article in question, has been through Canada. For the last seven years we have sent into Canada 12,586,892 bushels of wheat, while our direct trade to England, at the same time, has amounted to only 7,764,588 bushels, being 62 per cent. more to Canada than to England. Or, if we take the last three years, we have sent into Canada 6,325,607 bushels, and into England 2,097,598 bushels, being more than three times as much into Canada as into England. Here are facts, which no speculations can bend, which no theories can annul.

The questions which now present themselves for our consideration are these:—Why have we sent so little to England direct? And why so much to England through Canada? The answer to each of these questions is obvious. In our direct trade we come in competition with the north of Europe; and the low price of labor enables them to undersell us in the English market. This is the reason, and the only satisfactory reason, why our direct trade with England has been so small. And the reason why we have sent so much to England through Canada is equally obvious. Our wheat which goes into Canada is, after being manufactured into flour, admitted into Great Britain on the colonial duty, which is much less than her duty on wheat or flour direct from this country. I have examined the English tables of actual duties paid during each week of 1843, and I find the mean difference between the duty actually paid on colonial and foreign wheat to be 14 shillings the quarter, or 33 cents the bushel. All the wheat, therefore, which we send through Canada, is admitted into the English market on terms more favorable, by thirty-three cents a bushel, than the wheat which we send direct. From this, however, we must take the Canadian duty of the average of 8 cents per bushel, which reduces the sum to 25 cents.

Now this advantage of 25 cents per bushel—this monopoly of the colonial trade which we enjoy, and of which the north of Europe is deprived, is what enables us to send more there than two-thirds of our export of wheat to Great Britain. But repeal the corn laws of England, and we are deprived of this monopoly, and are brought directly into competition with the great wheat-growing countries on the Baltic, where the agricultural laborers can be obtained for from 8 pence to a shilling a day, and board themselves. Are the independent yeomanry of the West prepared to yield all the benefits of the Canada trade, and thus lose two-thirds of the market which they now enjoy? Are they willing to be brought into competition with the down-trodden Poles and serfs of Russia, and so be compelled to labor for fifteen or twenty cents per day? Would devotion to party, or the satisfaction of following out the delusive theory of free trade, reconcile them to a condition so

degraded? If they possess the independent spirit of freemen—if they are Americans—they will spurn such an idea.

But Mr. Secretary Walker, whose devotion to British interests has been complimented in that country by the publication of his report, would have us understand that the opening of the British ports to our grain would be a great blessing to this country. But on what principle does he found his theory? What facts does he adduce to sustain his position? None whatever. He asks us to believe, but furnishes us with no evidence to sustain our faith. In this respect he deals less fairly with us than Lord Ashburton himself. At a meeting at Winchester, Jan. 19, 1846, Lord Ashburton, when speaking on this very subject, said that “protection had existed in England from the days of the Plantagenets, whilst the whole line of country opposite to us on the continent—France, Belgium, Holland, and Prussia; indeed, almost every country in the world—monarchical Europe as well as republican America—had its protective laws and regulations.” “It was clear, that, in the event of a recurrence of difficulties, her (America’s) first step would be again to shut her ports against us—in which case the supply from America would undoubtedly fail us. But the supply must not be expected *from America*; and we could not have a better proof of this than the fact *that, at this moment, American corn could come here from Canada at a duty of 4 shillings; and yet, if the returns were examined, it would be found that nine-tenths of the foreign corn in England was from the Baltic, though the duty on the corn from its shores was 15 shillings a quarter.* This was entirely owing to the low price of labor in the north of Europe.”

Here Lord Ashburton, more frank than the American Secretary, admits that the United States would not derive any benefit from the proposed change in the laws. Speaking on this subject in Parliament, on the 29th of January, Lord Ashburton said, “the British farmer must not have his hands tied behind him. Did he meet the foreigner on equal terms? The farmer on the shores of the Baltic had his labor at six pence a day to compete with the farmer of this country, (England,) with his labor at 2 shillings a day. It required no skill in political economy to discover that these two parties did not meet on equal terms.”

These remarks in Parliament would apply with additional force in Congress. If the British farmer, whose labor costs him 2 shillings a day, cannot compete with the farmer on the Baltic, whose labor costs him 6 pence, how can the farmer in the United States, whose labor is worth 4 shillings a day, compete with the cheap labor on the Baltic? Lord Ashburton warns the people of England of their danger, but the advocate of British interests in this country would lead us blindly into the very jaws of this ruinous competition.

But, sir, this is not all. The very policy which would destroy the most important branch of our wheat trade, viz., that through Canada, would, at the same time, greatly impair our market at home. The best and the surest market for the wheat grower is found in the manufacturing districts in our country. This home market is near at hand, is not disturbed by ruinous foreign competition, is not subject to that fluctuation which has ever characterized the British market, and is, in fact, the principal market for our bread stuff. With our present protective policy, this market is constantly increasing. Sir Robert Peel has justly said, that the revenue and the demand, and the prices of labor and all commodities, seemed to depend upon the general prosperity of the country more than upon any particular legislation. Our present policy tends to produce that general prosperity, and so creates a demand for the agricultural products of the United States. The demand for wheat in this country is constantly increasing. Thousands who, ten years ago,

made rye and Indian corn their principal bread stuff, now consume a large quantity of wheat. The State of Massachusetts alone consumes about three times as much wheat, the growth of other States, as we send to England direct, and the New England States more than our entire export to all foreign countries.

Lest this position should be thought extravagant, let me present, in as brief a manner as I may, some of the facts on which this calculation is based. The present population of Massachusetts may safely be estimated at 815,000. More than half of our entire population are engaged in other callings than agriculture; and to those thus employed I give one barrel of flour, or five bushels of wheat, per head. This estimate cannot be considered extravagant. Those engaged directly or indirectly in manufactures and the mechanic arts, in trade and commerce in all its varieties, in navigation in all its forms, in the fisheries of all kinds, and those employed in the learned professions and as teachers—these with their families and dependants, would constitute at least 420,000 of our population, and would consume a barrel of flour per head. The other 395,000, employed in agriculture, may be assumed to consume a half barrel per head, which will give 197,000 barrels—making a total of 617,000 barrels of flour. Flour is also used in considerable quantities in manufactures. There is used in Lowell alone, for starch and sizing, at least 4,000 barrels annually, which may be considered as one-fourth of the amount consumed in the State. The quantity thus consumed, when added to that used as bread stuff, would make the entire consumption 633,000 barrels, or 3,165,000 bushels. This estimate is fully sustained by the imports into the State. There was brought into Boston, in 1845, 730,138 barrels of flour; and although one-half of this may have been reshipped, or sent to Maine and New Hampshire, the flour brought into Salem, New Bedford, Fall River and other smaller ports, and by the several railroads, will make up the deficiency. The railroad from Albany to Boston, in 1844, distributed within the interior of the State, of flour brought from Albany, 144,754 barrels. There was also brought into Boston, from other States, in 1845, 2,371,406 bushels of Indian corn, 548,583 bushels of oats, 24,184 bushels of rye, and 65,530 bushels of shorts. Nearly the whole of this was consumed in the State, and large quantities of the same kinds of grain were brought into the State at other points.

I have no means of knowing the amount consumed in the other New England States, but, as their population is about 1,600,000, it will be safe to give them, upon an average, three bushels per head, which will make a consumption of 4,800,000 bushels a year. This, added to the consumption of Massachusetts, will give a total of 7,965,000 bushels, being at least half a million more than our average export to all foreign nations. I have estimated the consumption of the New England States, other than Massachusetts, at considerable less per head than my own State; because, with the exception of Rhode Island, they are more agricultural, and because they raise a greater proportion of wheat from their own soil. This estimate may not be entirely accurate, but I am confident that it cannot be far from the truth.

But manufactures are not by any means confined to New England. New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and several other States, are deeply engaged in them; and all these manufacturing establishments furnish so many markets for the wheat growers. If the repeal of the corn laws should cut off our trade through Canada, we should have a surplus which would reduce the price, and so injure the grain growing interest. Nay, if our duty on foreign wheat were repealed, the Eastern States would, when the crops are good in Europe, receive a portion of their supply from the Baltic. And if our present protective policy is to be bartered for a repeal of

the corn laws, and large quantities of British goods are to be thrown into our market, it will prostrate many of our manufactories, and thereby destroy the home market, which the grain growers now enjoy. Let our present policy be abandoned, and the surplus of Europe be thrown in upon us, and the balance of trade will soon be turned against us; in which case our specie will be sent abroad, our currency will be deranged, and all the evils we experienced a few years since will return. Individual enterprise will be paralyzed, our imports will fall off from our inability to purchase, and the Government will be bankrupt as it was in 1841-'2. These are the evils which the proposed policy will, in my estimation, bring in its train.

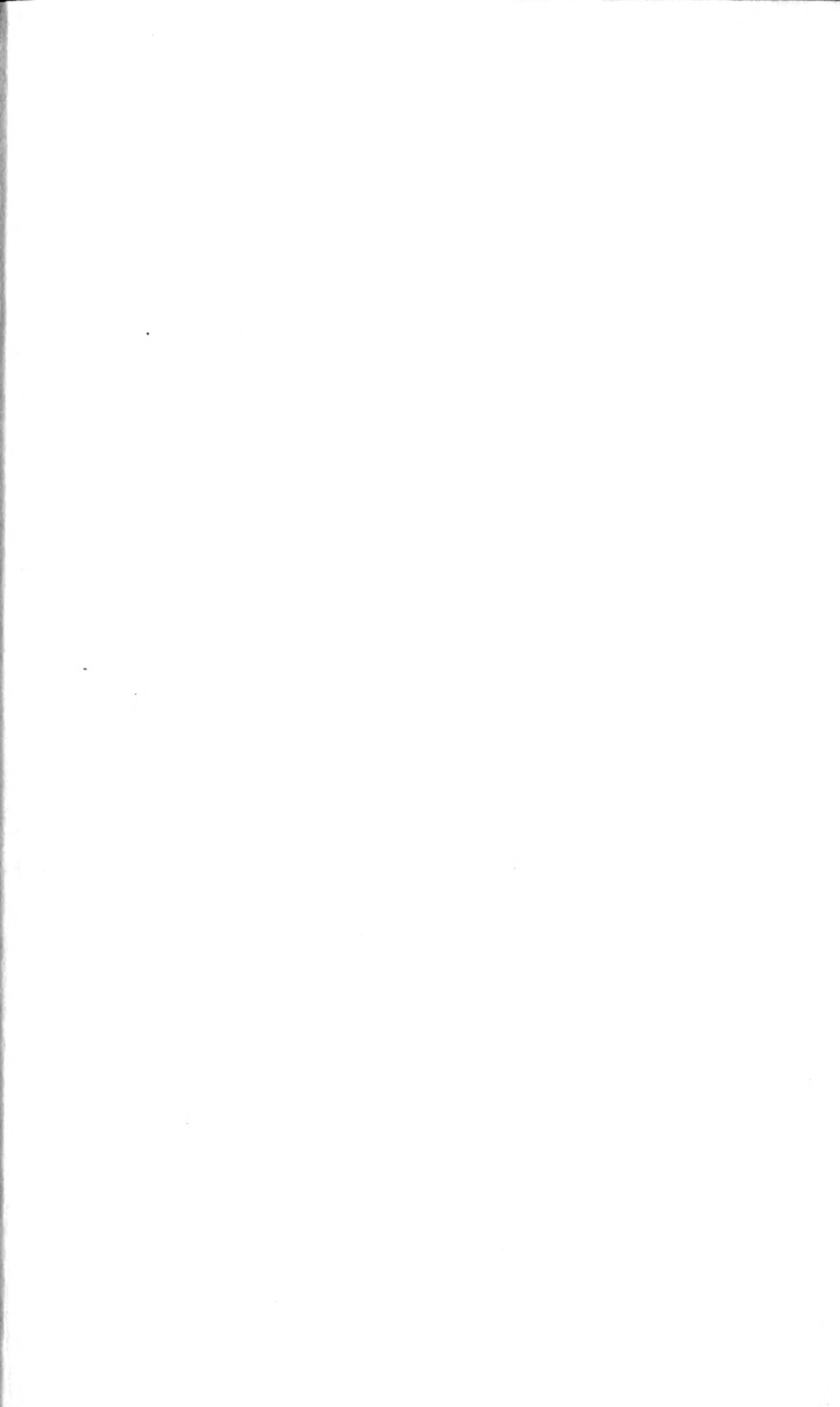
But we shall be told that Great Britain has set us a noble example, and we, as a free people, should follow it. But what is the example which Great Britain has set? She has consulted her own interest; and proposes to make such a modification of her policy as is, in the estimation of her ministry, best suited to her present condition and the condition of the world. She sees that her corn laws have excluded the wheat of Germany and Prussia, and have driven them into manufacturing. She sees that, instead of being her customers, they are beginning to become her competitors for the markets of the world, and she wishes to arrest their progress. She sees, also, in the United States a great and powerful rival, and she wishes to embrace the present opportunity to check our growth and impair our prosperity. She regards the present moment as peculiarly favorable to strike the fatal blow. She beholds in our Chief Magistrate a leaning to a commercial policy which is well suited to her condition, but illy adapted to our own. She finds in the Secretary of the Treasury an advocate of her interests, and she greets him with "well done, good and faithful servant."

But if gentlemen suppose that Great Britain has any special reference to the welfare of any other nation, let them undeceive themselves. All her proposed changes have reference to her own prosperity. She takes the duty off from American cotton, not to benefit our cotton growers, but to enable her own manufacturers to compete more successfully with the manufacturers of this country for our market, and the other markets into which our manufactures have found their way. If she wishes to promote the agricultural interests of this country, why does she not abate her 1200 per cent. duty upon American tobacco, and suffer it to come in at a moderate rate? No nation looks more carefully to her own interests than Great Britain; and no one legislates more understandingly. Her agriculture and manufactures have been carried to the highest point of perfection; and, seeing herself in advance of the nations, she now proposes free trade, with a full conviction that she will prove more than a match for them in such an unequal contest. She has built herself up by her Navigation act, and other restrictive measures, and now she proposes a partial abandonment of that policy, and kindly invites other nations to give up the very policy which has made her what she is. Free trade with such a nation would be like intercourse between the wolf and the lamb. To the one it might prove beneficial, but to the other it would be death. Free trade, in fact, can never exist between nations situated so differently as the United States and Great Britain. If both nations should model their revenue laws after the same standard, the trade between us would not be "free and equal." Her accumulated capital, her low rate of interest, the cheapness of her labor, the advanced state of her manufactures, would give her an advantage over us. You must make all things equal at home, by equivalents and balances, before any two nations can have a system of commercial intercourse which will be *strictly reciprocal, and equally productive of the prosperity of both.*

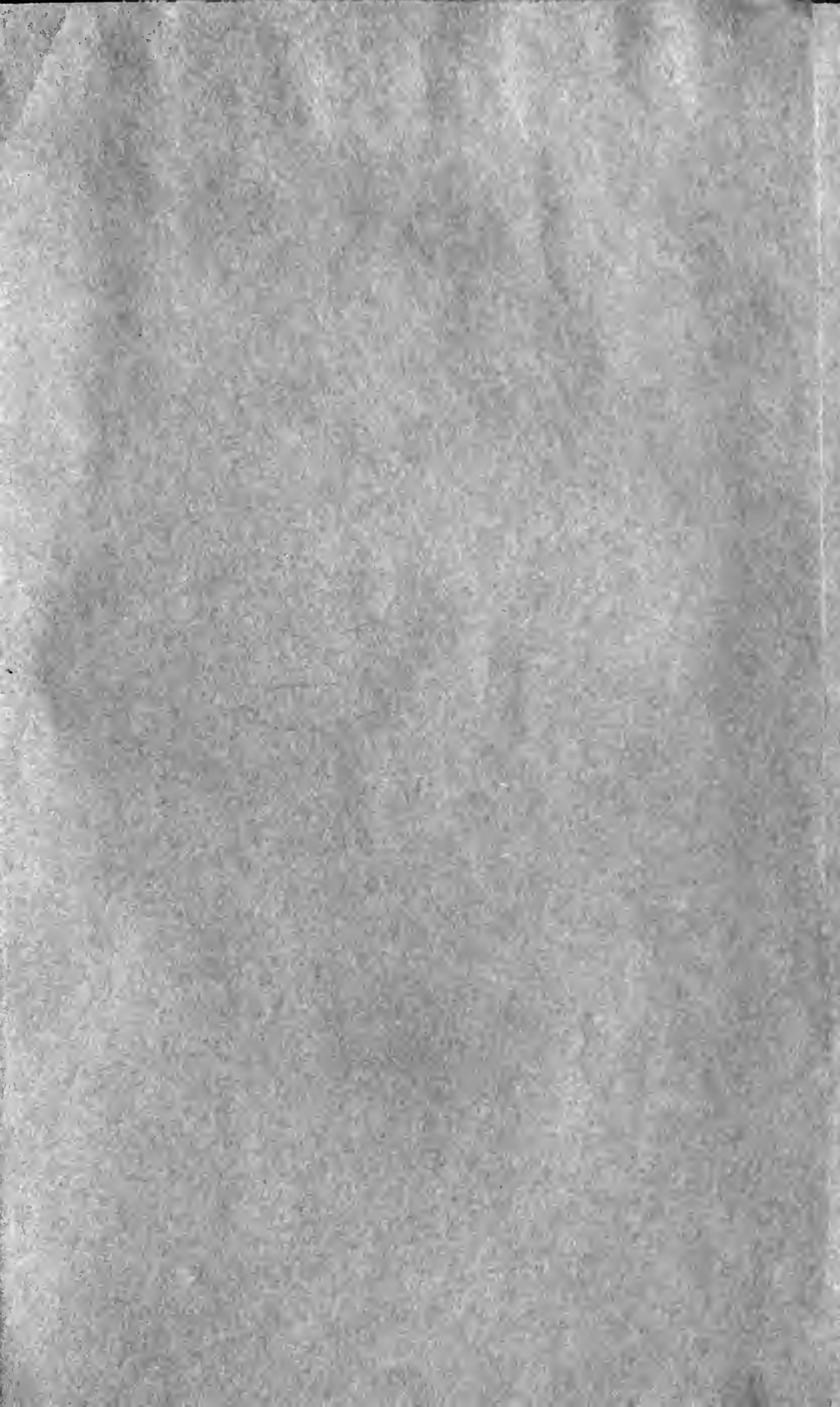
I do not intend to censure Great Britain for the new policy which she proposes.

She is the guardian of her own interests, and will see that they are well protected. In fact, I consider her example worthy of our imitation. She conforms to her condition, and it becomes us to conform to ours. The cheapness of capital and the low price of labor in that kingdom are the great characteristics, so far as this question is concerned; and, in order to meet her on equal ground, our independent laborers must consent to come down to the low standard of the half starved labor of England. They must be content to labor for from 30 to 50 cents per day, and board themselves. But are they willing to do it? Will the free born citizens of America consent to degradation like this? I trust they will not. The glory of our country consists in the fact that here "the laborer is worthy of his hire." The great mass of our people are born to no other inheritance than the privilege which our country holds out to every industrious man, of obtaining a comfortable living by the fruit of his own toil; and he is a freeman, indeed, who is born to such a patrimony. The consciousness that he can sustain himself by his own hands, and that well directed industry will enable him to provide for the maintenance of his family and the education of his children, more than any thing else, gives character to an American, and makes him what he was designed to be by his Creator, a *man*.

But if we are to adopt the principle of free trade, the manly and independent character of our laborers must be given up; and they must content themselves with dragging out a miserable existence in poverty and wretchedness. This, after all, is the great objection to the policy which has been recommended. The rich man needs no sympathy. His wealth will give him consequence in any state of society; and a change, such as free trade will bring upon us, would increase the relative value of his treasures. Bring the laborer down to the English standard, reduce his wages to the low level of the old world, and you put him completely into the power of the capitalists of the country. Such a change would break up our small manufacturing establishments, and turn many an honest laborer out of employ. But the Lowell manufactories would go on; the price of labor would be reduced, and, having no competition, these wealthy establishments would continue to make fair dividends. The South and the West would suffer most. Their infant manufacturers would be prostrated; but the older and more skilful establishments of New England would survive. Their currency would be deranged; but the accumulated wealth in the Eastern States would supply them with a sound circulating medium. Born to toil, the hardy sons of New England would put forth their energy and enterprise; and, by that industry and frugality for which they are distinguished, they would obtain a comfortable livelihood; they would have "bread enough, and to spare;" while their brethren, in some other sections of the country, "would perish with hunger." New England desires no change. She believes that our present policy is best adapted to the interests of the whole country. Being laborers ourselves, our sympathies are with those who eat their bread in the sweat of their brows. We adhere to our present policy, because the interest of labor requires it; because a change would fall heaviest upon those who have no capital but their own hands. But if a change must come—if the prosperity of the country must be stricken down, the sons of the pilgrims, enured to toil, and familiar with hardships, will turn their attention to their ice and their granite, and convert them into bread. If folly must prevail in our national councils, and the storm of adversity ensues, they will endeavor to brave the tempest; and, though they have no desire to "ride upon the whirlwind," they will, as far as in them lies, so "direct the storm" that its pitiless peltings may fall upon other heads than their own.







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